In the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A method of transmitting electronic messages in a computer environment, comprising the steps of:

receiving an original electronic message addressed to a telephone number;

determining an instant message identifier associated with the telephone number;

determining in real time whether an instant message receiver is currently available to receive messages addressed to the instant message identifier; and

performing a step ~~form~~from a group of steps consisting of:

forwarding the electronic message as an instant message addressed to the instant message identifier in response to a determination that an instant message receiver is available to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier; and

sending the electronic message to a mobile device at the telephone number in response to a determination that no instant message receiver is available to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the electronic message comprises any of:

a text message, an SMS text message, an MMS message, a video message, and an audio message.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the instant message is received at an electronic device configured to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 3, wherein the electronic device comprises any of: a computer, a personal data assistant (PDA), and a telephone receiver.

5. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of determining ~~the~~ an instant message identifier comprises searching for the instant message identifier associated with the telephone number in a database.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

determining whether or not to forward the electronic message as an email message addressed to an email address according to a user preference stored in a database.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

determining whether or not to forward the electronic message as an instant message addressed to the instant message identifier according to a user preference stored in a database.

8. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 7, wherein the step of determining whether or not to forward is further based on source information of the electronic message.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 8, wherein the source information comprises any of:

a source address of the electronic message, a user name of a sender of the electronic message, a telephone number of a sender of the electronic message, and an instant message identifier of a sender of the electronic message.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the instant message is generated from the electronic message based on one or more predetermined rules.

11. (Original) The method of Claim 10, wherein the one or more predetermined rules select one or more portions of the electronic message as the instant message.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 10, wherein the one or more predetermined rules selectively delete one or more portions of the electronic message to generate the instant message.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of forwarding the electronic message to a storage medium.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing the electronic message in a storage medium.

15. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

determining whether or not to forward the electronic message to a storage medium according to ~~the~~ a user preference stored in ~~the~~ a database.

16. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

forwarding the electronic message to a storage medium when ~~the~~ forwarding the electronic message to ~~the~~ an email address and ~~the~~ to an instant message identifier fails.

17. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 15, wherein the step of determining whether or not to forward is further based on source information of the electronic message.

18. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 15, wherein the user preference stored in the database comprises date and time preference of the instant message receiver.

19. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprisesing the step of logging the forwarding of the electronic message.

20. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprisesing blocking the forwarding of the electronic messages based on a list of telephone numbers.

21. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ forwarding is based on ~~the~~ one or more predetermined rules.

22. (Currently amended) An apparatus for transmitting electronic messages in a computer environment, comprising:

a module for receiving an original electronic message addressed to a telephone number;

a module for determining an instant message identifier associated with the telephone number;

a module for determining in real time whether an instant message receiver is currently available to receive messages addressed to the instant message identifier;

a module for forwarding the electronic message as an instant message addressed to the instant message identifier in response to a determination that an instant message receiver is available to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier; and

a module for sending the electronic message to a mobile device at the telephone number in response to a determination that no instant message receiver is available to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier.

23. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the electronic message comprises any of:

a text message, an SMS text message, an MMS message, a video message, and an audio message.

24. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the instant message is received at an electronic device configured to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier.

25. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the electronic device comprises any of:

a computer, a personal data assistant (PDA), and a telephone receiver.

26. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the module for determining the instant message identifier further comprises a module for searching for the instant message identifier associated with the telephone number in a database.

27. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising:

a module for determining whether or not to forward the electronic message as an email message addressed to an email address according to a user preference stored in a database.

28. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising:

a module for determining whether or not to forward the electronic message as an instant message addressed to the instant message identifier according to a user preference stored in a database.

29. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the module for determining whether or not to forward the electronic message is further configured for determining whether or not to forward based further on source information of the electronic message.

30. (Original) The apparatus of Claim 29, wherein the source information comprises any of:

a source address of the electronic message, a user name of a sender of the electronic message, a telephone number of a sender of the electronic message, and an instant message identifier of a sender of the electronic message.

31. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising a module for generating the instant message from the electronic message based on one or more predetermined rules.

32. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein the module for generating the instant message is further configured to use the one or more predetermined rules to select one or more portions of the electronic message as the instant message.

33. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein module for generating the instant message is further configured to use the one or more predetermined rules to selectively delete one or more portions of the electronic message to generate the instant message.

34. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 22, further comprising a module for storing the electronic message in a storage medium.

35. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising a module for determining whether or not to forward the electronic message to a storage medium according to ~~the~~ a user preference stored in a database.

36. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising a module for forwarding the electronic message to a storage medium when ~~the~~ forwarding the electronic message to ~~the~~ an email address and ~~the~~ to an instant message identifier fails.

37. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 35, wherein the user preference stored in the database comprises at least date and time preference of the instant message receiver.

38. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising a module for logging the forwarding of the electronic message.

39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising a module for blocking the forwarding of the electronic messages based on a list of telephone numbers.

41. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the module for forwarding the electronic message is further configured for forwarding the electronic message based on ~~the~~ one or more predetermined rules.

42. (Currently amended) A program storage medium readable by a computer, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform a method of transmitting electronic messages in a computer environment, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an original electronic message addressed to a telephone number;

determining an instant message identifier associated with the telephone number;

determining in real time whether an instant message receiver is currently available to receive messages addressed to the instant message identifier; and

performing a step from a group of steps consisting of:

forwarding the electronic message as an instant message addressed to the instant message identifier in response to a determination that an instant message receiver is available to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier; and

sending the electronic message to a mobile device at the telephone number in response to a determination that no instant message receiver is available to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier.

43. (Original) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the electronic message comprises any of:

a text message, an SMS text message, an MMS message, a video message, and an audio message.

44. (Currently amended) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the instant message is received at an electronic devices configured to receive instant messages addressed to the instant message identifier.

45. (Original) The medium of Claim 44, wherein the electronic device comprises any of:

a computer, a personal data assistant (PDA), and a telephone receiver.

46. (Original) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the determining the instant message identifier comprises searching for the instant message identifier associated with the telephone number in a database.

47. (Previously presented) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

determining whether or not to forward the electronic message as an email message addressed to an email address according to a user preference stored in a database.

48. (Previously presented) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

determining whether or not to forward the electronic message as an instant message addressed to the instant message identifier according to a user preference stored in a database.

49. (Original) The medium of Claim 48, wherein the determining whether or not to forward is further based on source information of the electronic message.

50. (Original) The medium of Claim 49, wherein the source information comprises any of:

a source address of the electronic message, a user name of a sender of the electronic message, a telephone number of a sender of the electronic message, and an instant message identifier of a sender of the electronic message.

51. (Original) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the instant message is generated from the electronic message based on one or more predetermined rules.

52. (Original) The medium of Claim 51, wherein the one or more predetermined rules select one or more portions of the electronic message as the instant message.

53. (Original) The medium of Claim 51, wherein the one or more predetermined rules selectively delete one or more portions of the electronic message to generate the instant message.

54. (Previously presented) The medium of claim 42, wherein the method further comprises a step for storing the electronic message in a storage medium.

55. (Currently amended) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the method further comprises a step for determining whether or not to forward the electronic message to a storage medium according to ~~the~~ a user preference stored in a database.

56. (Currently amended) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the method further comprises a~~the~~ step ~~for~~of forwarding the electronic message to a storage medium when ~~the~~ forwarding the electronic message to ~~the~~ an email address and ~~the~~ to an instant message identifier fails.

57. (Previously presented) The medium of Claim 55, wherein the user preference stored in the database comprises at least date and time preference of the instant message receiver.

58. (Currently amended) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the method further comprises a step for logging the forwarding of the electronic message.

59. (Canceled)

60. (Currently amended) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the method further comprises a step for blocking the forwarding of the electronic messages based on a list of telephone numbers.

61. (Original) The medium of Claim 42, wherein the forwarding is based on the one or more predetermined rules.